

Integrating Fall Prevention into Practice

Working as a multidisciplinary team, healthcare providers can help identify and manage patients at risk of falling. You can help reduce falls by screening all older persons once a year for previous falls and/or balance problems.

For those who screen positive, perform a fall risk assessment, and help patients understand and act upon the findings using proven prevention strategies.



Assessments and/or Interventions	Identify who in your practice can do this	What it involves
Screen all older patients for falls		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have patient complete the <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure, or ask the patient these 3 questions:<ol style="list-style-type: none">Have you fallen in the past year?Do you feel unsteady when standing or walking?Do you worry about falling?
Identify modifiable fall risk factors		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Review the <i>Stay Independent</i> brochure, and take a falls history.
Evaluate gait, lower body strength, and balance		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Administer one or more gait, strength, and balance tests:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Timed Up and Go Test (Recommended) Observe and record patient's postural stability, gait, stride length and sway.30-Second Chair Stand Test (Optional)4-Stage Balance Test (Optional)As needed, refer to a physical therapist (PT), or recommend a community exercise, or fall prevention program.
Conduct focused physical exam		<ul style="list-style-type: none">In addition to a customary medical exam:<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assess muscle tone, look for increased tone, and hypertonia (cogwheeling).Screen for cognitive impairment and depression.Examine feet and evaluate footwear. Look for structural abnormalities, deficits in sensation, and proprioception.If needed, refer to podiatrists or pedorthists.
Address modifiable and/or treatable risk factors		
Assess for and manage postural hypotension		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Check supine and standing blood pressure using 1-page protocol, <i>Measuring Orthostatic Blood Pressure</i>.Recommend medication changes to reduce hypotension.Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes.Counsel patient, and give the brochure, <i>Postural Hypotension: What it is and How to Manage it</i>.
Review and manage medications		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Stop, switch, or reduce the dose of psychoactive medications when possible.Monitor patient as he/she makes recommended changes.
Increase vitamin D		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Recommend a daily vitamin D supplement.
Assess visual acuity, and optimize vision		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Administer brief vision test.Refer to ophthalmologists or optometrists.
Address home safety, and how to reduce fall hazards		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Counsel patient about reducing fall hazards. Give the CDC brochure, <i>Check for Safety</i>.Refer to OT to assess safety and the patient's ability to function in the home.
Educate about what causes falls, and how to prevent them		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Educate patient about fall prevention strategies.Give the CDC brochure, <i>What YOU Can Do to Prevent Falls</i>.Recommend exercise, or community fall prevention program.
Identify community exercise and fall prevention programs		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Have staff contact providers of senior services.Identify community exercise and fall prevention programs for seniors.Compile a resource list of available programs.